

## LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE

Charles D. Kelso, Alexandria, South Dakota, writes: "In your issue of December 28, 1906, you give a draft of the Beveridge Child Labor Law and state your approval of same and think it should receive support. I, myself, think it a vast improvement of anything on the statute books at present, and if it can not be bettered should vigorously support it. I would like to offer some suggestions. We are all aware that the one great evil connected with the child labor question is, that not only do the employers and their representatives falsely give the child's age, but, also, do the parents, as was shown in Mrs. Van Vorst's articles in the Saturday Evening Post. I consider to make it impossible to misrepresent the age is the most important point to accomplish. The Beveridge bill accomplishes this the most nearly of any bill known to me, but I believe we can and should make it absolutely impossible to misrepresent the child's age. In the Beveridge bill we have only the chance that we might happen to discover some violation of the provision. How are we to prove an affidavit false if the parent says the child is so old and the employer abets. Further, the affiant may be innocent of any false swearing. I do not think we should depend upon the parents' word for the age, but provide a record. These are my suggestions: Make it compulsory upon every physician attending at birth to furnish a certificate of birth showing the sex, name, if known at the time, color, name of father and mother and nationality, place of residence, giving town (or city), street and number, county and state, day, month and year of birth and occupation of father. Verify this certificate by an oath and file it with some county officer in the county where reside parent's of child. If there be no physician, require this of the mid-wife, and if none, of some person present of sufficient age to understand the oath. If none of these persons be present require this of the mother. The census commissioner should be held responsible for securing such certificate of every birth in his county. This record, so complete as to make it possible to identify a child, becomes a part of the public record for inspection by any one. The employer should not be allowed to employ any person, a certificate of whose birth is on file, unless he receive from the officer in whose custody this certificate is placed a certified copy of said certificate and place it on file in his office subject to the inspection of any officer or person. Of course, such a law will not have effect at once as it is necessary that children who have been born since its enactment grow to the age of employment. I hope, if any suggestion I have here made appeals to The Commoner it will, through its pages, interest those who are at work to remedy one of the blackest evils in our midst. I believe it to be the absolute duty of every citizen in our land to do what he or she can to stop the employment of babies. If the money that is used to erect monuments and library buildings was one-half used to aid effective legislation along this line we would soon feel its effects. I know there is no paper before the reading public that will carry more weight than The Commoner and for that reason hope you will find it possible to agitate such a provision as I herein suggest, providing it accords with your ideas."

James W. Peelee, Summit, New Jersey: Vice President Fairbanks stated in one of his speeches which I read, that the government ownership of railroads would result in a fizzle, be unsatisfactory, and for the interest of the country they would have to be sold back into private hands. Also before he finished this speech he told his audience what an awful menace Mr. Bryan was to the present glorious conditions and how his state and national ownership of railroads would lead to socialism. Will the Commoner please explain to me Mr. Fairbank's logic? If, as Mr. Fairbanks says, the public ownership of railroads will be a fizzle and prove to be against the interests of the people, why would this lead the people to take any thing else out of private hands and, therefore, as he says, bring about socialism? It looks to me as though the vice president is short on logic, or is afraid the people are going to hurt themselves, or, perhaps he has fears they may really learn something which he already knows which being interpreted is to say, he believes the state and national ownership of railroads might prove to be more satisfactory to a majority of the people than the present private ownership, but would not be so satisfactory to the few gentlemen who now control them and for

whom he has a very warm place in his heart. Have also noticed in the papers a number of times what a terrible burden this buying of the railroads would be. These writers who keep telling us how well off we, as a people, are and then, without even stopping to let the ink get dry or even suggesting that they are joking, try to impress us with the fact that it would be a burden for eighty million of people to own the railroads though every one with ordinary intelligence knows a few hundred thousand of this great eighty million now own the railroads and so far as we can see it does not appear to be much of a burden, either. They say it would weigh down eighty million of people so flat financially to acquire what a few hundred thousand now own that we never would rise again. If that is a fact, then the conditions under which our wealth is distributed can't be so glorious as Mr. Fairbanks would have us think. It may be there are some who through special privileges are getting more than their share, perhaps the public ownership of railroads would help end this special privilege and perhaps Mr. Fairbanks is afraid it would. Now this may be, after all, what is troubling Mr. Fairbanks. Who knows? Let us hammer away at all this nonsense about the danger of the people getting hurt. Mr. Bryan, or any other man who may be elected president, can not take over the railroads only by the mandate of a majority of the people, then it must be, of necessity, a gradual process from private to public ownership and the people can be trusted to know when they have enough. Also let the country know, in season and out of season, that there is not much chance of a railroad being taken over by the government of any state or by the national government which is following these rules and honestly living up to them, namely: Passenger and freight rates based on dividends (annual) not to exceed five per cent on the actual cash value of road, rolling stock, building, etc. (less value now under the heading of franchises, as for the most part, they belong to the people anyway). An economical management regarding salaries of officials, etc., an eight-hour day as far as possible for employes, at standard wages, a due regard for the comfort and safety of passengers, no rebates of any kind given (either direct or indirect), no discrimination against any place, person, or concern, no free passes, uniform charges to all. Absolutely nothing but railroad business; no interference in either town, county, state, or national politics. Any road following the above rules will not be compelled to sell unless needed to complete a system which would be to the public advantage to own. But don't let us worry about that, for I guess any road on the above basis would just as soon sell out to the people, for the owners would be such true blue Americans that they would gladly do that which was for the good of all.

William Looser, Greenville, Pa.—Your editorial entitled "The Asset Currency Scheme—Watch It" is a good one and should receive broadcast circulation. If there ever was a time that the people should be put on their guard against the forces that have for the past forty odd years, and are right now, laughing down the contention of Lincoln that we can legislate in favor of the moneyed interests without undermining the foundation of our government, it is right now. The harvest of corruption, the evidence of the nation's fall in manhood, making itself manifest in a thousand and one ways, is the natural fruit of our having for the past forty odd years given the national bankers everything that they asked for. To them we surrendered the franchise right to issue and furnish the nation's need for new and more circulation. The new scheme is simply one asking for a widening of the franchise right that they have for these long years enjoyed. If they succeed and are allowed to go right on as they have been, an "era of corruption," as Lincoln termed it, will follow in this land of ours that will put the present one in the shade. Every reader of The Commoner should see to it that this scheme is brought to the attention of the public through some source, either through their local paper or distribution of sample copies of The Commoner.

Charles H. Mathews—Will you kindly print the following prophetic lines and please one of your subscribers, who has just passed his eighty-seventh mile-stone, but hopes to linger long enough to vote for a democratic president in 1908:

The Warning

More than fifty years ago the great poet Henry

W. Longfellow wrote the following suggestive lines:

"Beware! The Israelite of old, who tore  
The lion in his path,—when poor and blind,  
He saw the blessed light of heaven no more,  
Shorn of his noble strength and forced to grind  
In prison, and at last led forth to be  
A pander to Philistine revelry.

"Upon the pillars of the temple laid  
His desperate hands, and in its overthrow  
Destroyed himself, and with him those who made  
A cruel mockery of his sightless woe;  
The poor, blind Slave, the scoff and jest of all,  
Expired, and thousands perished in the fall!

"There is a poor, blind Samson in this land,  
Shorn of his strength, and bound in bonds of steel,  
Who may in some grim revel, raise his hand  
And shake the pillars of this commonweal,  
Till the vast temple of our liberties  
A shapeless mass of wreck and rubbish lies!"

Henry B. King, Augusta, Georgia—I have just seen in Current Topics of your issue of the 11th the question propounded by Theodore Harris: "What article is that in common daily use by all men, and women, which, if all the other conveniences we have to account among the necessities of life had to be given up, we would by common consent retain?" If Mr. Harris had stopped there, the answer to his question would, to my mind, be simple and it was by confining my attention to the quoted question that I last night arrived at the conclusion that the answer was "bed." This morning, however, looking over the article again, I find Mr. Harris' explanations hardly fit my hypothesis; for beds were certainly "invented" more than one hundred and twenty-five years ago. Anyhow, my answer seems to meet all the other conditions, and as it was acquired at some little expenditure of gray matter, I venture to send it to you.

## THE AUTO TRUST

A Marion, Ohio, reader sends to The Commoner a copy of the Ohio State Journal, containing an article showing what the automobile trust did for a projected new industry at Columbus, Ohio. The article follows:

"Some Columbus men who have put quite a lot of money in developing a new automobile engine, intending to put a new automobile on the market, have run foul of the automobile trust, and indications are that the factory will not be built. Practically every manufacturer of automobiles in the country is a member of the Automobile Manufacturers' association and for this membership and the license to do business under the auspices of the association pays to the association one per cent of his gross sales. For this payment he receives a number of advantages, not the least of which is participation in an iron clad agreement that no manufacturer will supply automobiles to any dealer who acts as agent for unlicensed machines. This puts the automobile trade of the country in the hands of seventy-six manufacturers composing the association. Any agent of the association can not be directly or indirectly interested in the manufacture or sale of an unlicensed machine or he will lose the agency for the licensed machines. When the association learned that Columbus men were to engage in the manufacture of automobiles, a representative of the association was sent to them. As they are interested in a garage which has the agency for a number of machines, they were told that all of these would be taken away from them if they put a new machine on the market. 'But we will take out a license when we have perfected our engine and are ready to place it on the market,' they said. 'No, you won't,' answered the agent of the association. 'We have decided that there are enough manufacturers of automobiles in this country and no more licenses will be issued.' The local men could do nothing and have decided that they don't want to engage in the making of automobiles, especially as the hostility of the association would prevent them from placing their machine on the market except at a ruinous cost for special agents in every city, as none of the agents now in the business would handle an unlicensed machine."

The day after the New York Herald showed that a big navy was a good thing because it enabled us to promptly succor Jamaica, the American naval squadron sent to Jamaica sailed away from that place on request of the governor. The Herald will now have to hunt up another one.